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VI.—*A Contribution to the Ethnology of the Chinese.* By
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[*Read March 12th, 1867.*]

THE Chinese are generally supposed to be a homogeneous race of men, of a marked Mongolian type. So far, this is to some extent perhaps correct, though the characters of the type are not so uniform in any one locality, no more than throughout the whole area of China, as is generally supposed.

It does not take long, on visiting any part of China, to convince ourselves that all our preconceived notions of the Chinese type of countenance are very erroneous. It is only occasionally, and that after a stretch of our imaginations, that we do perhaps detect a face having some resemblance to the ideal form we are familiar with in the paintings on old china, and but rarely recognise an individual we can pronounce to be really like a Chinaman according to our preconceptions. In short, the variety of countenances is as puzzling in a crowd of Chinamen, as in a crowd of people in any other country.

Foreign residents in China soon learn to recognise modifications in the peculiarities of form of individual countenances; that in some the prominence of the malar bones is very exaggerated, in others it is hardly to be noticed; that some Chinamen have more prominent noses than others; that in some the interval between the eyes is very remarkable, while in others it has no such abnormal appearance; that while some may have considerable obliquity of the eyes, the eyes of others are not at all oblique. In the course of time, we are also able to recognise the distinctive characters of the inhabitants of the different provinces; and, though in some instances it may be a difficult matter to designate in what the distinctions consist, there are cases where the differences are very marked, for instance, the inhabitants of Quangtung (Canton) are at once recognised by their squareness of face, massive jaws, and prominent malar bones; they are generally short set, and stoutly built. On the other hand, the inhabitants at Kiangsu (Shanghai) are taller, lighter in build, have less prominence of the malar bones, smaller jaw, a more tapering face, at times passing into the oval form.

Of all the characteristics of the face of a Chinaman, the most commonly noticed is the flatness of the inter-orbital space, and the consequent small size and little prominence of the nose, but

even this peculiarity varies considerably, not so much in prominence of the surface as in width of the space. In some instances this width is most remarkable; I have measured one individual, and found the distance from the inner angle of one eye to that of the other to be one inch and three-eighths in length. The nose of the Chinese is sometimes found almost as narrow inter-orbitally as the noses of Europeans, and, like theirs, it is aquiline or oblique, or even *retroussé*; in no instances are the nostrils extended, and no matter what may be its form, it is small in size. A foreigner, unless his nose be very small indeed, no matter how well disguised, is at once recognised by the size of his nose; it is the first feature remarked upon by the Chinese when he appears among them, "what a big nose he has got!" being a common observation.

With regard to the difference in the relative size of the noses of the two people, it is certain that the Chinese are capable of withstanding the abominable smells in their streets and in their fields under cultivation, which to the European are utterly intolerable—I allude to their system of conservancy in their towns and their agriculture. The question whether the smells reduced the size of their noses or not, remains an open subject for speculation.

In some instances of broad inter-orbital spaces I have observed a fold of skin overlap the inner angle of the eye, and only disappear half-way between the angle of the eye and the *alæ* of the nose. Rarely a very marked obliquity of the eye is met with, just as it is equally rare among the Japanese. I mean an obliquity amounting to an angle of about one hundred and twenty degrees; yet we find this form of eye in sculpture and in drawing, not only over the area of China, but also of Japan, Thibet, and over Asia generally, and also in Egypt. It would appear that obliquity of the eyes is less a characteristic of the Chinese than of surrounding nations; for instance, the Gylyaks, inhabiting the shores of the straits of Sagalien, have it as a constant peculiarity; the Thibetans are delineated by travellers with very oblique eyes; and the most exaggerated instance of it I have ever seen was in a Malay soldier in the Ceylon Rifles.

Eyes of Chinese, especially in the more northern parts, are generally very small compared with those of Europeans; the diameter is much less and the aperture much narrower, so that I found great difficulty in performing operations on them. It was very seldom that a large full eye was met with, yet I have seen such. In considering this subject, it struck me that very possibly the size of the eye had become so modified by the effect of the climate; the exposure to the dust storms, which occur at certain periods of the year, give rise to a great amount

of diseases of the eyes, especially entropium, which Dr. Lockhart and others, who, like myself, have had experience in hospital practice among the northern Chinese, can testify to. May not the continued habit of closing the eye, and the irritation set up by the particles of dust have produced this result, which has become hereditary and fixed?

In a recent work on ethnology it has been stated that every possible variety of shade of skin is to be met with in China, —permanency being understood. There could be no greater mistake than this; which arises from the fact that the skin of the Chinese, more especially in those of the north of China, undergoes a great change of colour during the different seasons of the year. I have noticed, in the fields about Tien Tsin, the labourers who were at work during the excessive heat of the summer, with merely a common band round their loins; or who were employed as coolies carrying burdens through the town on the wheel-barrows of the country, the upper portion of their bodies being without covering; to be as dark-skinned as any Kaffre in South Africa. So much did this strike me, that, at the time, I thought they must have had some mixture of Negro blood, till I subsequently noticed that these coolies and labourers lost the dark tint of their skin, and became like the ordinary complexion of Chinamen in the cooler seasons.

I had also observed that when the Cantonese coolies, who were employed with the expedition in North China, stripped for bathing, one part of their body which had been exposed to the sun (they generally stripped themselves to the waist while carrying their loads on very hot days) was of a very dark tint compared with the parts which were not exposed. In some this was more marked than in others; but the appearance the majority presented was very remarkable.

I have not observed this darkening of the skin to be so well developed in the Chinese labourer in the south of China as it is in the north, where also the skin is sometimes seen to be almost as white as in Europeans. The dryer and (in the summer) hotter climate of the more northern provinces may cause this difference; the climate of the south is more humid, and the temperature does not reach the same height in summer.

The Chinese do not appear to be in the least contaminated by Negro blood, and thus we find the population of the eastern division of Asia presents a different aspect from that of the western. Is this because China was too far away from the coast of Africa? or is it because the lazy unindustrious Negro could not be tolerated, and was worthless to the energetic laborious Chinese?

I can hardly suppose that the Hottentot race of South Africa,

whose skull bears some resemblance to the typical Chinese, could be the remains of a Chinese colony established there in remote ages like those of the Arabs and natives of India at present on the east coast, as described to us by Burton, and other travellers, to carry on the slave trade. If such were the case, and that Negro slaves were ever imported into China, the traces of the Negro have become completely obliterated in the race.

Throughout China there are several isolated groups of the inhabitants, more or less independent, and having specialities in their language and customs peculiarly their own. They are called generally the Meaon tse by Chinese writers, who have enumerated them for us, and described their appearance and customs, and the locality where they are to be found. There are eighty-two groups tabulated in the work of a Chinese author, the translation of which is published in the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society's Journal for 1859. It is very probable there are many others not yet described. Some of these Meaon tse are described as being black, others as white skinned; but till we know the peculiarities of climate and the circumstance of exposure, we cannot form an estimate of the permanency or otherwise of the blackness of the skin. They are described as being more or less rude; some are wild savages. Blackiston describes some of these people met with at the farthest limits of his travels up the Yang tse.

I have myself noticed a few women belonging to one of their tribes in the streets of Tien Tsin. They came from Shantung. They were recognised by the peculiarities of their dress, but in other respects their appearance did not show any difference from the ordinary Chinese. They were strolling musicians, sung songs, and accompanied the air by striking flat pieces of wood in the hand, resembling *bones*, with which they kept a monotonous time. They had a patois only intelligible to themselves, but could speak Chinese.

Although using the same written character, the dialects of the Chinese are very various. The dialect of Pekin differs from that of Nankin, and both differ from those spoken at Canton and Fokien, which also differ from each other, so much so as to present the appearance of being separate and mutually unintelligible languages. So much is this the case that it is not uncommon for those who bring Chinese servants from the south of China to find that they do not understand the language spoken in the northern parts of the country, and that they are obliged to resort to English to make themselves understood by their own countrymen. It is frequently found that it is a matter of some difficulty to understand the dialect spoken in a

village; while in another a few miles apart the dialect may be quite intelligible. These different dialects show that the Chinese language, if ever it had an unity, is capable of great and, perhaps, as we shall presently see, rapid modification.

The children of a village always associating together for play, in China, perhaps, more than in any other country, acquire modes of expression of thought and of pronunciation of words, so easily altered by change of accent or emphasis in Chinese, which are used in after life; and not being given to much locomotion or mixing with strangers, these new words and mode of accent become fixed. Schools and the study of the classics may prevent this to some extent; but yet they are not sufficient to prevent change; we find a great modification of the word sounds of the classics has taken place. The Japanese have studied this subject, and published the result in the form of a dictionary of the ancient and modern sounds of the characters used in the four books (*Chinese Classics*).

As a further illustration of change in the pronunciation of Chinese from lapse of time and of difference of dialects, it may be stated that the word Japan, which is written by two Chinese characters meaning the *sun* and *source*, was pronounced in the north of China, in Marco Polo's time, as if spelled Zi pan. The modern sounds would be Jeh pōn, meaning the same as Ni pon, the southern or Nankin mode of pronouncing the same characters, and now adopted by the Japanese themselves to designate their country.

The nations who have had an ethnological influence on the Chinese are few. It might be supposed that the Mongolians have stamped them with their features, and have repeatedly renewed their mark by overrunning their country at different periods; but, independent of this, when we come to analyse their language, we find that Mongolian, Manchu, Turkish, and Chinese have evidenced in their radices of words so great a similarity, that we may infer a common origin to them all. The remarks of Mr. Edkins, the well-known Chinese scholar, who is now engaged in these investigations, bear so much on this point that I may quote those he kindly sent to me in reply to inquiries I had been making on this subject. He says:—

“I have lately been examining the connection of the Chinese and Mongolian languages, and find great reason to believe that the physical resemblance of the races mentioned by travellers is borne out by connection of language. The connection from this point of view must be sufficiently ancient to allow of the growth of the existing differences in the languages, which are great. My result is that the Sinensian and Turanian families were connected anterior to the growing up of tones in Chinese.

Chinese *tien*, old Chinese *tĕn*, Mongol *tengri*, *heaven*. Chinese *ti*, old Chinese *de*, Mongol *du*, old Mongol *degu*, *a lad*. In the word *tĕngri* the suffix is *gri*, the root is *tĕn*. In *degu* the suffix is *gu*, the root *de*. Tones have developed themselves in Chinese, and also compound forms, as *hiung ti* and *siau ti* for *brother*. In Mongol the suffixes have been appended without tones. The roots of a vast number of Mongol words are the same as in Chinese. The same is true, but in a less degree of Manchu and Turkish, which also bear a resemblance in root words to the Chinese, but are of less extent; according to this theory, therefore, these three branches of the Turanian family should be related in origin to the Chinese."

Persia has helped to modify the Mongolian type to a considerable extent. It is to this source I am inclined to consider the oval form of face, and the more prominent nose, and those long-bearded venerable looking heads we now and again meet with among the Chinese, are due.

In reply to my inquiries relative to this subject, Mr. Edkins informs me that "the Turkish Mahomedans I have met with in Peking wear red caps. The ordinary Chinese Mahometans here are probably of Persian origin; they wear both blue and white caps. We cannot find any traces of Jews or Hebrew in Peking. The Mahometans use Persian and Arabic books."

"The Mahometans of Canton are probably of Arabic descent, coming in the time of the Arabian trade with China. Mahomet's uncle died at Canton."

"The Persian Mahometans seem to have come into northern and western China in great numbers for purposes of trade. The same impulse which brought the Arabs to the sea coast brought the Persians from Bokhara, etc., and both originated in the national impulse communicated to the Arabians and Persians by the Mahometan religion and the effect of the conquest."

Mr. Wylie, quoting from the narrative of Abou Zeyd Al Hassan, tells us that in 878 a general massacre took place at Kan Fu:—"People who are well informed regarding the affairs of China relate that there perished on this occasion a hundred and twenty thousand Mahometans, Jews, Christians, and Parsees, who were established in the city, and carried on trade there, besides the number of the natives who were put to death. The number of persons of these four religions is known because the Chinese government levied an impost upon them according to their numbers." (*Chinese and Japanese Repository*, August, 1863, page 44.)

It is to this source, perhaps, we may attribute those Chinese noticed in the north of China, who, if they would allow their

whiskers to grow, would show at once their Jewish or Persian origin ; one of these individuals was well known as a fur dealer in Fur-street at Tien Tsin.

The nations to the south may have had some influence, while they were strong, vigorous, and civilised, such as the ancient Laos ; but latterly the Chinese appear to have had an influence on them, and hence an Indo-Chinese group has been formed. We have as yet had little or no intercourse with the more southern provinces of China, viz., Yunan ; but the Chinese appearance of the Burmese is unquestionable.

On the sea-coast, the Arabs have had intercourse at an early date, but their communities as colonists at the trading towns were, perhaps, not greater, if so great, as the foreign communities now established at Fuchow, Ningpo, Shanghai, etc. And the Japanese, though at one time in possession of the district city of Suchow, exerted little influence in an ethnological point of view.

After the Arabs, the Portuguese, Dutch, English, Americans, and French have had intercourse with China ; but, whatever may be the extent of their religious, social, and political influences in the course of time, their ethnological influence can be but small.

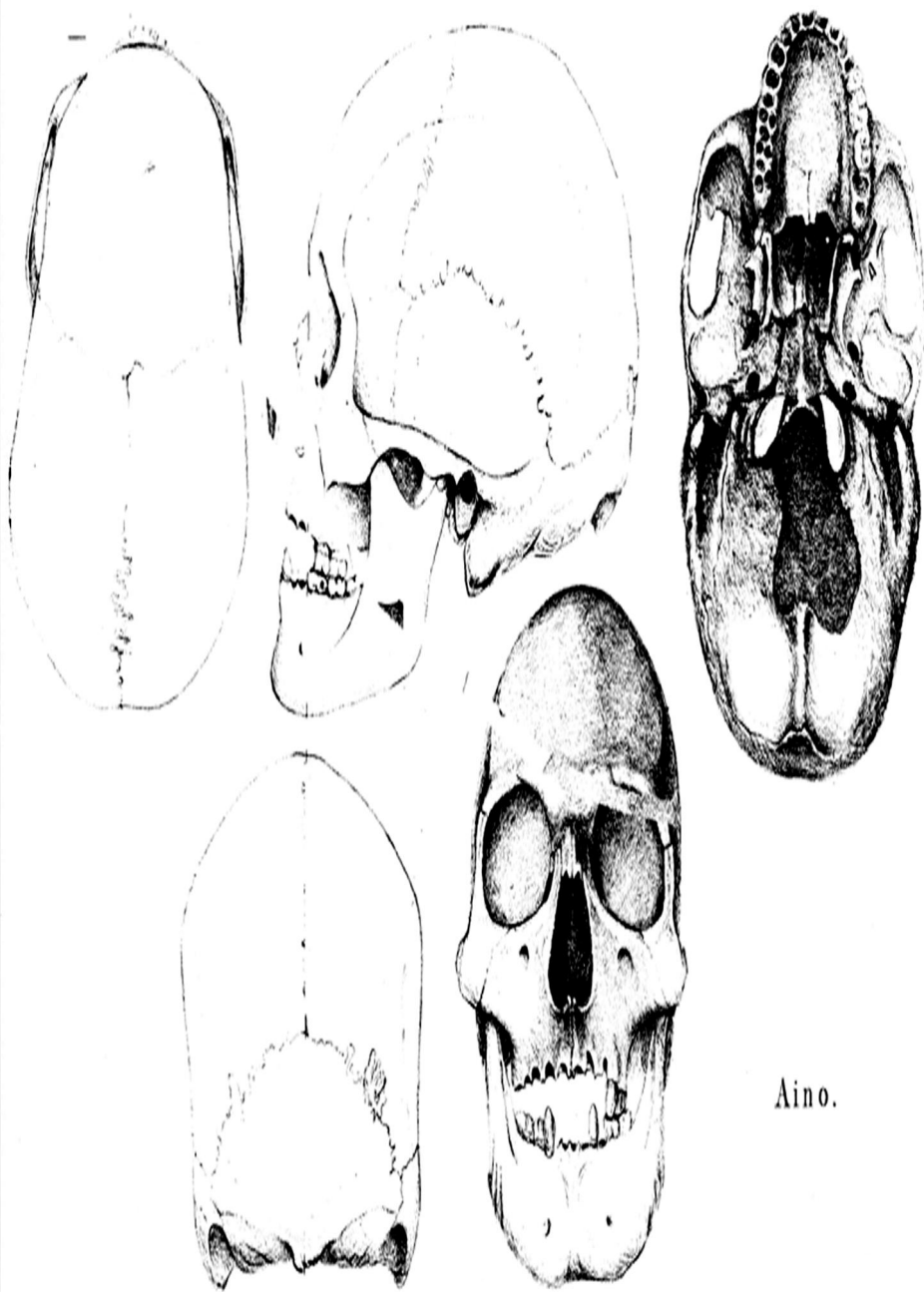
The hair of the head of Chinamen in general is black in colour, coarse, and free from curl ; however, when grown to its full length, it appears slightly wavy, as for example in the Chang Maou boys. I have once seen a Chinese lad of sixteen years of age with decidedly red hair, and, as usual in such cases among Europeans, he had a remarkably clear fair skin. I was under the impression that probably he derived the tint from foreign parentage ; but on inquiry, such was denied, though his family resided in the neighbourhood of the foreign settlement of Shanghai. Another instance of red hair in a Chinaman was mentioned to me as occurring in a full-grown man, who was taken among some rebel captives, and who belonged to a district remote from foreign settlements. In Chinese paintings representing some of their celebrated warriors, the hair of their heads is frequently coloured bright red ; but the colour is so rare among the Chinese that foreigners having this peculiar tint cause much wonder and astonishment. Occasionally Chinese children in the vicinity of the foreign settlement may be seen having a light shade of colour in their hair ; in such instances the foreign element is quite unmistakable.

In the north of China a brownish tint appears to prevail to some extent, at least more especially in young persons, whose hair is not of the black tint noticed so generally in the south of China. I have remarked that even grown-up people from the

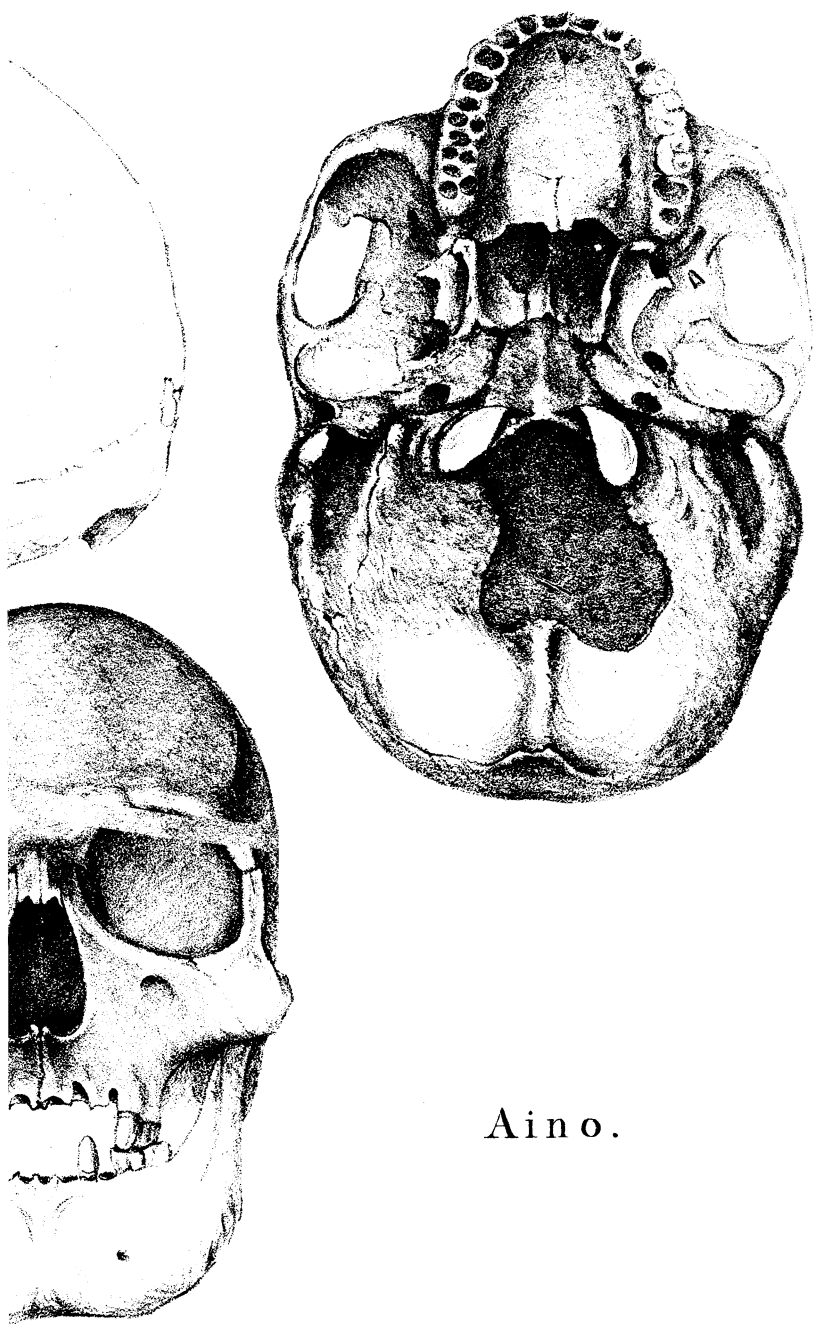
province of Shantung show a brownish tint or shade in their hair, especially in that of the moustache, I have seen some decidedly foxey; and in the Shu Kings we find the Chinese mentioned as "the black haired people," which evidently means that their black hair distinguished them from people whose hair was not black; so that it is possible in isolated districts, such as Shantung, must have been, at the earliest period of Chinese history, when it was separated from the remainder of the country by a wide marshy uninhabited waste, there were tribes of aborigines whose hair was probably of a brown colour. In the history of the early progress of the Chinese, allusion is made to contact with local tribes.

In the Ming and preceding dynasties, it was customary for the Chinese to wear their hair long, and to tie it up on the top of the head, much as the Coreans do now; but, on being conquered by the Tartars or Tsings, they were compelled to shave all the head except a small portion on the top and back of it. This hair was plaited into a queue or tail as it is generally called. This was enforced as a mark of submission. The Taepings showed their hostility to the Tsings by allowing their hair to grow, and were in consequence called Chang Maons or long haired ones. The Maou Tsze, or independent tribes, continue to wear their hair long; and the people of Fokien, who long resisted the Tsings, wear turbans to conceal their mark of submission. Turbans are worn by the soldiers in the Chinese Imperial Military Service.

The Mongol characteristic is more particularly exhibited in Chinese physiognomy by the absence or partial development of moustache, beard, and whiskers. It is not uncommon to see an old Chinaman with two or three short straight hairs in his chin as the only indications of a beard, and in such cases hair forming moustache or whiskers is often entirely deficient. The hair in both sexes is little developed, and when present is of the same straight, short, wiry character as that of the face. Wherever exceptions occur, they are, no doubt, attributable to mixture of foreign races, and hence the instances of long-bearded, or, if they did not shave, of large whiskered men seen among them.



Aino.



Aino.